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CIA protesters disappointed that so few face prosecution

By CHARLIE BRENNAN

Rocky Mountain News Boulder Bureau

BOULDER — Leaders of the recent massive protest against the presence of CIA recruiters at the University of Colorado were disappointed to learn Friday that only six of 210 people arrested will be prosecuted.

"I think that when we were negotiating (with CU police before and during the daylong protest), we didn't think we were negotiating away our chance to a trial," said Meg Ruby, a Boulder resident and co-leader of Community in Action.

"I think it's a shame that they took a few people to be scapegoats."

Those six people all went beyond the ground rules for Monday's protest, which had been hammered out by CU police and the demonstration organizers, Boulder district attorney's spokesman Bill Wise said.

One of the six, Joseph E. Abner, 21, pleaded guilty to obstructing a peace officer and was sentenced Thursday to the four days in jail he had already served.

Mark Fearer, 29, is charged with obstructing a peace officer, interference with university operations and resisting arrest.

Michelle Keranen, 23, also is charged with obstructing a peace officer and interference with university operations.

Facing charges of attempted trespass and interference in a public building are Cindy Pieropan, 24, Mark W. Rolofson, 26, and Stanley Tolle, 31.

Boulder attorney George Johnson, who was representing Community in Action for free, said he will leave it up to the group whether he will represent the five defendants who are due to appear in court next week.

"Community in Action is totally nonviolent and committed to nonviolence, and to some extent these allegations allege some violent and undisciplined behavior," Johnson said.

Like Ruby, Johnson expressed regret that the other 204 protesters arrested will not have a chance to prove their claim in court that it is the spy agency recruiters who are lawbreakers because of their alleged role as conspirators in violent crimes committed by the CIA throughout Central America.

"After their decision last year, I'm resigned to it," Johnson said. "I did not expect that it would be different. But we want to make our case, that's for sure."

In April, police made 478 arrests during a three-day CIA recruiting visit. None of those arrested was prosecuted.